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A STUDY OF SELECTED FACTORS CAUSING EARLY WITHDRAWAL FROM HIGH SCHOOL

by

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B. A. Yankton College, 1922

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

1954

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM, LIMITATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

The problem of the child who eschews the education offered him is not a new one. Mothers have always grappled with it, and the intellectual leaders of the state were attempting to effect its solution at least as far back as the beginning of the Christian era when education was declared by law to be compulsory for the Jewish boy. Compulsory education predicates a lack of voluntary attendance on the part of some of the children who are expected to be instructed, and wise men from the beginning of historic time have known that education of the youth was the determining factor of civilization. Voluntary withdrawal from provided schooling thus assumes proportions of importance in any nation, but democracy is uniquely vulnerable to its dangers. Massachusetts early took the lead in America in attempting to solve the issue of educating all the children by passing the compulsory school law of 1852. Within the next half century most of the other states followed her example and set age limits within which school attendance was required. What the age limit was and the severity with which it was enforced varied from place to place, but some degree of education was forced upon every child in most of the states of the Union by 1900.

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This solution apparently was satisfactory to the nation as a whole, and for a time the educator forgot to worry and the school enrollment increased despite his optimism. Then came World War I followed by the depression and the intense competition for every job which left many citizens without any source of income, the least skilled being the most severely affected. America began to realize that, while the nation's children, under compulsory laws, finished the fifth and often the sixth grade and many of them completed the eighth year of schooling, that amount of schooling was no longer enough. The years from 1930 to 1945 gave factual evidence that the modern boy or girl needed a high school education to be economically independent. At the same time, studies, being conducted by educators, pointed out that only five of every six children entered high school and that 50 per cent of those entering did not remain to graduate.[1] This was a grave situation and the educators were seriously concerned. Widespread studies were immediately started to find out why so many young people were leaving school before graduation and what could be done about it. The outcome of these initial surveys and investigations has only now begun to take form and two overlapping explanatory patterns have emerged. One is the explanation given by the child himself, on withdrawal from school. The other is the

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[1]Harold J. Dillon, Early School Leavers, A Major Educational Problem, National Child Labor Committee, Publication No. 401, New York: Moak Printing Company, 1949, p. 9.

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complex of characteristics that, in whole or in part, seems to mark the potential non-graduate before the time of his withdrawal. The two patterns are by no means identical and they are being continuously augmented by the results of investigations made in individual local school systems.

Purposes of the Study

A part of the purpose of this study was to conduct a survey of a local school system, using only that portion of the criteria developed for use in such investigations which was available in a reliable form in the school files, or by direct interview with the student involved. No evidence was used which was obtained by word of mouth from a secondary source. This portion of the study was divided into two parts on the basis of major and minor causative factors. The three major factors: lack of general ability or low I.Q., failure to participate in school activities, and retardation were so considered because of general agreement among investigators as to their being symptomatic of the student who was prone to withdraw before graduation. The minor factors are so designated because of the lack of agreement among investigators as to their importance. Some investigators believe them most pertinent, others do not recognize them as having any influence in early school leaving. The particular factors used: the hidden costs of schooling, the yearly incidence of withdrawal, and membership

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in a minority group were selected because they appeared to have particular bearing on the withdrawal of students in the local school system which was picked as the object of the investigation, or because their complete lack of import was unusual enough to be significant.

In addition, two other elements in the school situation were suggested and discussed as influencing the pupil in his decision to withdraw or to remain in school. Those factors were the pupil's relationship with his teacher and the point of responsibility maturation of the student, himself. This latter point has been designated by the phrase, responsibility readiness.

The majority of school withdrawals are believed to occur in the ninth and tenth grades, so the survey was limited to junior and senior high school, and the class entering the seventh grade in 1948 was selected for study. Material was secured from the school files and from the class members themselves, both graduates and non-graduates whenever possible. Insofar as the data were available, the criteria used are those described in the manual of the Illinois State Holding Power Study; holding power meaning the ability of the school system to retain its members until graduation from the twelfth grade. When a member is not so retained he is called a drop-out or an early-leaver. The findings in the local study are reported in the third and fourth chapters.

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The second purpose of the study was to examine the specific causal factor of marriage in the problem of the early school-leaver. When the study was begun, there were two reasons for desiring to investigate this specific cause. One was that it was known to be an important factor in the local situation under discussion, where a nearby air base makes early marriage among the girls a serious problem. The other reason was that the available material on marriage as a cause for early withdrawal seemed to be most inconclusive.

As the investigation was developed, the significance of the particular causal factor of marriage became more pronounced, since the evidence appeared to indicate that it was this factor which affected predominantly that group of drop-outs most competent to continue their education. A questionnaire was used as the basis for obtaining information in this portion of the study and all data were compiled from the answers to the questions mailed to two cities in each state. Material taken directly from the responses to these questionnaires is not footnoted as it is considered to be in part confidential. The knowledge of the regulations which were common in the United States concerning school attendance of married students, and the extent to which early marriage affected the drop-out rate in the high schools were believed to be helpful first steps in analyzing the total situation. In addition, the local marriage problem might be bettered by constructive suggestions found in the answers to the questionnaires. These were the results desired.

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Limitations of the Study

The limitations in the local problem were imposed largely by the lack of reliable material on the student who had already left the school system. The limitations in the wider study of marriage as a specific causal factor were imposed because so little had been previously accomplished in this field and only the initial steps could be taken. In other words, only preliminary data could be gathered which might help form a vantage point from which future investigations could be carried on.

The early school-leaver is an economic liability to the whole community. He is not prepared to support himself independently; and he is often a job-leaver as well as a school-leaver, making him a poor business risk.[2] The community has a large stake in the schools; it supports them financially and it employs the young people they train; and, when the school student becomes an adult, the community shares its responsibility for government with him. If the young people leave school before they have learned the skills necessary for self-support, or the judgment essential for the determination of values so vital to a citizen, the whole community suffers. When that happens in many communities as it did in 1946, so that only 41.9 per cent of

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[2]C. A. Christopher, panel discussion reported in Why Do Boys and Girls Drop Out of School, Work Conference on Life Adjustment Education, Circular No. 269, Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1950, p. 21.

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previous fifth grade pupils graduate from high school,[3] the entire nation suffers. Since the 1949 publication of these statistics the situation has improved and the schools are examining the problem from every angle. How large a percentage of the drop-outs would have profited and, in turn, profited the community, by further study? At what age and grade level does the largest group of children leave school before graduation? Does the fault lie entirely with the school or is it also a family and community problem? What particular phase of the school's program is at fault: the discipline, the curriculum, the school hours, or the personal relationships within the school room? These are a few of the questions educators are asking, and they are compiling factual data on which to base their answers. Those factual data come largely from the local school systems of every state.

As has already been mentioned, the investigation with which this study is concerned has been confined to a small area of the school's responsibility in the total problem. Within its limitations, the material to follow may help in some degree to clarify the local situation and may even raise a pertinent question or two regarding marriage as a specific cause for early school leaving.

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[3] Statistical Summary of Education 1945-46, Chap. I. Federal Security Agency Office of Education, 1949. Table 29.

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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Education does not supplement democracy, it <u>is</u> democracy, and educators whether realists or idealists have never ceased to feel the urgency of this vital fact. If democracy is to endure, education must be extended to all the people; and each decade in America has seen succeeding levels within the school system reach out for new groups to instruct. First the elementary grades, and then the high schools, have drawn in women and girls, the handicapped, the tradesman, the immigrant, the pre-school child, the Indian, the adult, luring them with new and specialized courses, assisting them when necessary and rewarding them with better jobs and more secure status among their fellows. Nevertheless, secondary education has boasted only recently that the high school is for all the youth. That boast brought with it the resounding repercussion that only about 50 per cent of "all the youth" were making use of their opportunity. Educators immediately began investigating why. It is usually the recency of these investigations which is important in any review of the literature on the early school-leaver. The material has not yet solidified into book form but must be sought in recent journals on educational subjects or in current magazines. A few books have been listed in the bibliography of this thesis but the discussion of the

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drop-out problem is incidental in their pages and only small gain can be made from their study. Then, too, the face of the problem changes almost from day to day. The first studies showed the most fateful years for drop-out incidence to be the ninth and tenth grades. Recent studies seem to be disproving this. Specific causes for early leaving were, in the beginning, thought to be low general ability or maladjustment. Recently investigators are questioning the validity of the first as a general assumption, and are adding other specifics of which this study treats one, that of marriage. For such reasons as these, the major part of critical reading on school withdrawals is confined to current publications, and the pages of any educational index are crowded with titles of the studies on the boy or girl who leaves school before graduation. The Education Index for June, 1950 to May, 1953 lists eighty-seven such articles under one heading alone, and eight studies of the non-graduate were published in the single month of May in 1954. Some of these articles are composed of the general findings in widely based surveys; some give specific findings in broad or narrow areas; some are reports on panel discussions; some are merely educator's opinions; and some are detailed instructions for carrying on investigations in the field of the grade or high school drop-out.

The interview sheet or questionnaire has been the most commonly used device in obtaining data on the early school-leaver. The leaver himself has been interviewed to

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obtain his reasons for leaving; his parents have been interviewed as to why they allowed him to withdraw; the teacher has been asked what factors in the school situation she believed responsible for the pupil's withdrawal; his employer has been called upon to describe the kind of employee the drop-out makes; and his former classmates have been asked to rate his personal characteristics in the period before he withdrew. To offset the subjectivity of the results obtained from these methods, comparative statistics have been employed in gathering material concerning the differences in I.Q., economic status, social adjustment, and home background of the graduate and the non-graduate. The results of these varied research methods have constituted a considerable body of material concerning the early school-leaver on both the local and national levels. For greater clarity and more concise comparison, this material has been divided for the purposes of the ensuing review into three categories: the general surveys, the local surveys, and specific aspects of the school-drop problem.

General Surveys

The one outstanding survey, the standard against which most subsequent criteria have been evaluated, is the investigation conducted by Harold J. Dillon and published in handbook form by the National Child Labor Committee in 1949. Dr. Dillon was well fitted for research of this type. He had been appointed Specialist in Educational Problems for the

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National Child Labor Committee in 1945, and held that position until 1948 when he became Executive Director for the Public Education and Child Labor Association in Pennsylvania. His research was thorough, being based on 1,360 school-leavers from Lansing, Michigan, Cleveland, and Cincinnati in Ohio, Indianapolis from Indiana, and small towns of Jackson County, Michigan. The teachers, counselors, principals, and attendance workers who assisted him were chosen for their knowledge of children and were given a complete in-service training before their actual work began. The material used in the study was gathered from three sources: the school records, the teachers, and the pupils themselves. Dillon found that the reasons and the indications of school withdrawal formed a complex, overlapping pattern of which the important, school-related elements were:

1. Lack of orientation
2. Regression in attendance and grades
3. A generally lower I.Q. pattern than that of the stay-ins
4. Non-participation in school activities
5. General lack of interest
6. Maladjustment manifested in personality conflicts with the teacher or with other children.[1]

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[1]Harold J. Dillon, Early School Leavers, A Major Educational Problem, National Child Labor Committee, Publication No. 40, New York: Moak Printing Company, 1949.

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Dillon's study is mentioned in detail, because most of the research which followed used his method of approach in studying the non-graduate and, because this study of the early school-leaver is quoted frequently in the succeeding pages of this study. Many school systems followed Dillon's example with state-wide or city-wide surveys: New York,[2] Kansas,[3] Virginia,[4] West Virginia,[5] and Illinois[6] being among them.

Of the five mentioned, the Illinois Holding Study is probably the most important to states in the Middle West. Sections of Iowa, Nebraska, Indiana and Minnesota have conducted general studies using as a manual the Illinois handbook, How to Conduct the Holding Power Study.[7] The handbook gives an individual student schedule of the questionnaire type with directions for its use and sample graphs and

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[2]W. L. Gragg, "Findings in Ithaca's Continuous Survey of Drop-Outs," Clearing House, 26:413-414, March, 1952.

[3]Dale Isaacs and Kenneth Anderson, "Drop Outs and Stay Ins," School Review, 60:255-257, May, 1952.

[4]Leonard M. Miller, "Graduates and Drop Outs in Virginia," School Life, 34:87 plus, March, 1952.

[5]Leonard M. Miller, "Increasing Education's Holding Power, A Progress Report on the West Virginia Education Association's Three-year Study, National Education Association Journal, 50:664-665, December, 1950.

[6]Harold C. Hand, "For Whom Are High Schools Designed," Educational Leadership, 5:359-373, March, 1949.

[7]Charles M. Allen, How to Conduct the Holding Power Study, Illinois Secondary School Curriculum Program, Bulletin No. 3, Springfield, Illinois: Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, May, 1949.

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tables on which to tabulate the results. If the survey is conscientiously carried out in a school system, there should be no area of instruction nor any student background left unprobed, and the schools using it have been well satisfied with the possible solutions suggested by the facts that emerged when the results were analyzed.

A second type of examination of the drop-out problem as a whole is found in the reports of forums or panel discussions on the subject in general meetings of such organizations as that of the National Association of Secondary School Principals,[8] or the Work Conference on Life Adjustment Education.[9] Such discussions include the eductions and suggestions of many local investigations and result in generalized conclusions combining the best points offered by all participants. The Work Conference on Life Adjustment Education summarized by stating that, "There is no easy answer to the problem of school drop-outs, but of this we are certain -- drop-outs represent our poorest social risks. If they are not to become the job misfits, the delinquents, and the public charges of tomorrow, their needs must be met today."[10] Such a conclusion may appear too general to be of

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[8]S. M. Lambert, "Increasing Education's Holding Power, National Education Association Journal, 39:664-666, December, 1950.

[9]Work Conference on Life Adjustment Education, "Why Do Boys and Girls Drop Out of School and What Can We Do About It?" Circular No. 269, Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1950.

[10]Ibid., p. 55.

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definite assistance but the specific instances on which it is based do offer practical solutions for the problem at the local level. Such usable suggestions are found in a discussion of the characteristics of the stay-in or graduate and how to develop such attributes. "Pupils with this type of spirit (i.e., a sense of we-ness) tend to remain in school. Student handbooks, welcoming committees, mixer parties for new pupils, and homeroom organizations are a few of the means of accomplishing this end."[11]

Such concensus of the opinions of educators widely recognized as successful in their respective fields is of great value to the local administrator and investigator. The contributions of such men as William Lee Gragg, who has conducted an exhaustive and continuous study of the drop-out in the public schools of Ithaca, New York, where he is Assistant Superintendent; or Robert C. Woellner, whose research on the early school-leaver has been carried on during his professorship in the Department of Education of the University of Chicago, where he teaches and edits the School Review, are replete with constructive suggestions for the school which is attacking the problem of the non-graduate for the first time.

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[11] Ibid., p. 60.

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Local Surveys

Articles by educators of known reputation are equally helpful when confined to a narrow phase or area of the problem. An example of the investigation which has been confined to a narrow area is to be found in Leonard Miller's "Graduates and Drop-Outs in Virginia" published in the School Life for March, 1952; and Harold Hand's "For Whom Are High Schools Designed" in the Educational Leadership for March, 1949 discusses in detail the particular part played in the drop-out problem by the hidden school costs.

But the expert is not solely responsible for the slow and admittedly inadequate, but nevertheless consistent, lowering of the drop-out rate in the past five years. The ordinary guidance counselors and administrators who have conducted investigations as to the numbers and causes of drop-outs in their own local systems have added clarifying data and, perhaps more important, intensive interest for the solution of the problem of school withdrawals. Instructors like Doran Warren of Austin, Minnesota,[12] and George Morgan of Glasgow, Montana,[13] have made significant individual contributions to the national study. This type of individual

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[12]Doran Warren, "Who Are the Most Likely to Drop Out of High School?" School Science and Mathematics, 54:135, March, 1954.

[13]George Morgan, "How to Recognize Early School Leavers," Montana Education, 28:7 plus, April, 1952.

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school study in the final analysis composes the national survey, ". . . . if we are going to correct holding power and improve curriculum it has to be done on the local school front. That does not mean 'the local school system front', but in a local school."[14] The confines of the local school bring the problem down to a size where it can be handled or where something can be done about it.

Specific Aspects

Another way of bringing the problem into manageable proportions is to study only one angle: the problem of the child who quits school to go to work,[15] or that of the low-income family who cannot afford the hidden school costs.[16] These particular angles are comprehensively handled in the current literature, as is that of the student who finds nothing in the curriculum to fit his needs,[17] or the student

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[14]Sanford, C. W., Why Do Boys and Girls Drop Out of School and What Can We Do About It. Work Conference on Life Adjustment Education. Circular No. 269. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1950. p. 30.

[15]E. H.Suerkin, "When Drop-Puts Go Job Hunting," Clearing House, 27:268-272, January, 1953.

[16]Harold H. Plunke, "Expense Paid by Seniors in Small High Schools," National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, 36:143-169 plus, October, 1952, and Raymond E. Schultz, "Can Parents Afford to Send Their Children to High School?", School Review, 60:285-291, May, 1952.

[17]Harold J. Flynn, "A Course for Drop-Outs," Clearing House, 28:486-487, April, 1954, and Work Conference on Life Adjustment, op. cit., p. 41-45.

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who is failing.[18]

However, some of the other individual phases have not been so widely discussed and written about. As an example, literature on marriage as a cause for early school-leaving is not so easy to find, although both Emily Duvall,[19] eminent sociologist, and Leslie Kirkendall,[20] Associate Professor of Family Life Education at Oregon State College, have written on the subject.

A simplified plan, resolving only one portion of the withdrawal problem may be tried out in an individual school and its success or failure added to the general formula for solution of the whole question. Such an instance occurred in the Hastings, Nebraska schools, in an attempt by Counselor William T. Jaques to identify the potential early school-leaver. This experiment is reported on at length in a later chapter.

A partial solution of the whole issue was also worked out in the Minneapolis schools in the area of the summer-drop, the former student who does not enter school at the beginning of the fall term. Community cooperation was called upon and Margaret Andrews, Consultant in Work

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[18]David W. Snepp, "Why They Drop Out," National Association Secondary School Principals Bulletin, 35:137-141, October, 1951.

[19]Emily Duvall, "Are They Too Young for Love?" National Parent Teacher, 48:46, March, 1954.

[20]Leslie A. Kirkendall, "Now It's Marriage in the High Schools," Education Digest, 17:32-33, December, 1951.

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Experience and Placement in the Minneapolis schools, reported that Minneapolis was able to reduce the number of its students who failed to re-enroll when school began in September from 11 per cent in 1945 to 4 per cent in 1949.[21]

The schools of the United States are concerned about the high rate of pre-graduation withdrawals and the current literature indicates that many school systems have begun to do something about it. The reports of their failures and their successes are recorded in the educational periodicals and the daily papers;[22] and, from this fund of related material, new investigators may gain the necessary background knowledge to begin additional studies which will help to increase the significant findings of the present decade on why almost half of the school population does not complete the twelfth grade.

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[21]Reported in the Minneapolis Journal of Education for May, 1951.

[22]See report of civic group attack on the problem of children who leave school before graduation in Jefferson County, Kentucky. Found in news column of the Louisville Times of October 16, 1953, p. 1.

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CHAPTER III

A STUDY OF THE DROP-OUT WITHIN THE FRAME OF THE LOCAL SCHOOL SITUATION: MAJOR FACTORS

Most of the research available on the subject of the early school-leaver has been conducted in the comparative field of the differences between such a leaver and the high school graduate. The types of differences studied range from dissimilarity in the placement of members of the two groups on the sociometric scale[1] to the variance in their family economic backgrounds.[2]

The widely divergent conclusions inevitable from such antithetical viewpoints have caused many educators to take the position that the only authority on the drop-out is the drop-out himself, and he has been repeatedly interviewed regarding the reasons that caused him to leave school. Although his answers may be reasonably questioned from the standpoint of objectivity, a specific response pattern has emerged which forms a practical basis for continued research. The five points of most uniform agreement in this response pattern appear to be:

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[1]E. Gordon Collister and Raymond G. Kuhler, "Sociometric Status of Sixth and Ninth Graders Who Failed to Finish High School," Educational and Psychological Measurements. 12:632-637, July, 1952.

[2]Harold C. Hand, "For Whom Are High Schools Designed?" Educational Leadership, 5:359-373, March, 1949.

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1. Not interested; curriculum not practical
2. Had to go to work or needed to help at home
3. Could not afford school, hidden costs too great
4. Failing
5. Didn't like teachers or fellow-students.

Setting up the Local Problem

With these five points as a background, a survey of the early school-leaver was attempted within the framework of a single class during its six years in the high school at Rapid City, South Dakota. The graduating class of 1954 was chosen for the study, because the members who had remained in school were available for questioning on material not kept in the school records. However, much data on the drop-outs themselves could not be found. In fact, the office files listed only 76 per cent (.764) of the drops recorded in the following charts; the other 24 per cent (.236) were summer or mid-term drops which showed up only when class registrations of preceding semesters were checked against those of the current one. When a name appeared on the roll of one semester and not on that of the succeeding one, it was necessary to check the class next lower to see if the individual had been retarded a grade, and, also, the class above to see if he had been advanced a year. If the name appeared on neither of these lists, it was assumed that the pupil had failed to enter school. Nevertheless, to make certain such

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was the case, all such names were checked against the existing rolls of all classes as of 1953-1954 so that any re-entry would be found and tabulated.

Rapid City is a town of about 36,000 inhabitants with a Junior-Senior High School enrollment of 1800. The 6-3-3 Plan is used in dividing the school units but both junior and senior high school are housed under one roof. Since the student would thus be subject to the same environmental conditions during the whole of his high school course all six years, 1948-1954, were used as a basis for investigation.

In the past ten years the high school enrollment has almost doubled but there has been no additional high school building. This creates a classroom problem which has been solved by an increased student-load for each teacher, a load which now varies from 120 to 250 students. This may have an important bearing on the drop-out record of the past six years, as it would be impossible under such circumstances to give adequate individual attention to each student.

The high school graduated 235 students in this year's class but the total enrollment in the class of 1954 throughout the six years of high school was 522, indicating that there were fifty-two more drop-outs than graduates. However, a more detailed study of the figures showed that seventy of the drops were transfers to other schools or to other classes within the high school. This left a final reading of eighteen more graduates than drop-outs or a total drop-out

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record of approximately 42 per cent (.4189), a percentage which is in accord with the findings of Harold Dillon in his study of thirteen hundred early school leavers in which he found that 50 per cent of those entering high school do not remain to graduate.[3]

Response Pattern Obtained

The number of early leavers in the class of 1954 rated Rapid City High School as only slightly above the generally accepted national average in its holding power. The reasons for leaving school, listed on the students' drop cards, also indicated little variation from the average response pattern. A summary of the responses is found in Table I, page 23. Of those whose records were available, namely those who were not summer or mid-term drops, almost 29 per cent (.2867) or more than a fourth stated that they dropped school because they were not interested. On the other hand, not quite 10 per cent (.0979) quit school to go to work or because they were needed to help out at home. Only one student admitted that the cost of schooling was too great. This tallies with the facts ascertained from the expense records kept by a group of seniors which showed that many students did not spend as much as fifty dollars for all high school activities, even in their graduation year.

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[3]Harold J. Dillon, Early School Leavers, A Major Educational Problem, National Child Labor Committee, Publication No. 401. New York: Moak Printing Company, 1949, p. 7.

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TABLE I

REASONS GIVEN BY THE SCHOOL-LEAVER FOR HIS WITHDRAWAL FROM THE RAPID CITY SCHOOLS

REASONS FOR LEAVING SCHOOL	Boys No.	Boys Per cent	Girls No.	Girls Per cent	Totals No.	Totals Per cent
Marriage	0	0	20	9.2	20	9.2
Failing	7	3.3	2	.9	9	4.1
Not interested	27	12.4	14	6.4	41	18.8
Would give no reason	16	7.3	16	7.3	32	17.4
16 years old	4	1.8	1	.4	5	2.3
Had to go to work	6	2.7	5	2.3	11	5.0
Needed at home	0	0	3	1.3	3	1.3
Health	5	2.3	4	1.8	9	4.1
Superintendent's permission	2	.9	0	0	2	.9
Unable to pay tuition	1	.4	0	0	1	.4
Enlisted - Armed Services	5	2.3	0	0	5	2.3
Homesick	1	.4	0	0	1	.4
Institutionalized	0	0	4	1.8	4	1.8
No records available	42	19.3	32	14.7	74	34.0
Subtotals	116	53.4	101	46.5	217	100.0
Transfers	34		36		70	
Drops who re-entered	14		12		26	
Subtotals	48		48		96	
TOTALS	164		149		313	

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Failing was probably a contributing factor in many instances but only nine students or 6 per cent (.062) of the tabulated drop-outs gave it as the actual cause for leaving school.

The last reason of the five, that of disliking either the teachers or the pupils was not listed on any of the drop-out cards. It figured often in the oral conferences with the thirty-two pupils, 23 per cent (.23), who would give no reason for leaving school, as well as in many other guidance consultations; but the school counselor had kept no record of such conversations and felt the emotional content inherent in such a reason made it invalid as objective data.

The one noticeable variation in the reason-response pattern was that of marriage; a reason which has gained momentum since military service has become a component part of every student's plan for future training. Marriage accounted for twenty of the drop-outs or almost 10 per cent (.092). Since this constitutes a comparatively new phase of the drop-out problem, it is treated in a separate chapter.

The other 18 per cent of the drop-outs gave a variety of reasons for leaving school. Five said only that they were sixteen and therefore free to withdraw; they should probably be added to the forty-one who stated that they were simply not interested in school. There were nine students who left because of their health; five who enlisted in the

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Armed Services; four who were institutionalized, two who left by reason of the superintendent's permission; and one who confessed he was too homesick to remain when it meant being away from home.

Symptoms Revealing the Early School-Leaver

As has been suggested, statistical studies in the comparative differences of the early school-leaver and the graduating student do not always confirm the drop-out's own opinion as to his reasons for dropping. Investigators have come to the conclusion that certain symptoms, taken in conjunction one with the other, often mark the potential drop-out. If this is true, it should be possible to pick out the potential early leaver and help him to solve his problem before he comes to the actual point of withdrawal.

An interesting experiment along this line has been conducted by William T. Jaques, Director of Guidance at Hastings, Nebraska, a town of some 20,000.[4] The study was begun in the second semester of the 1950-1951 school year, and made use of Gragg's ten characteristics of the prospective drop-out which were listed as follows and used as criteria:

1. Excessive absence
2. A score in the lowest decile in a standard mental intelligence test

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[4]Permission to quote from this study granted in writing by Director Jaques under date of May 11, 1954.

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3. A broken home
4. Failing grades
5. Retardation
6. Poor family educational background
7. A male
8. Lack of participation in school activities
9. A low score on a standardized reading test
10. Parental background of occupation in unskilled labor or service.

Four classes beginning in the seventh grade were charted and any student showing four of the above characteristics was considered as a potential school leaver. Thereafter, each incoming seventh grader was so classified and at the close of the 1952-1953 school year it was found that 207 of these students had been selected as possible dropouts; 119 of whom should have graduated. Mr. Jaques gives this summary of results in an unpublished report of his study.

> Of this original group of 119 pupils, 50 have dropped out of school, 3 have been sent to penal institutions, 1 was dismissed from school, and 1 is deceased and 9 have transferred to other schools, and we have graduated 13. This leaves a total of 42 still in school at the close of the 1952-53 school year. Of this group some have shown marked improvement in their school work. Several have shown improvement. Some are beginning to take part in activities and thus are making a better adjustment to school.

The question may arise as to whether the 119 designated in the study actually were potential drops, in other words whether the criteria used really identified the early

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school leaver. Mr. Jaques believes that it does and defends the validity of his standards by quoting the fact that, of forty-nine drop-outs in 1952 and 1953, twenty-nine were included in the list of prospective drops.

If, as Mr. Jaques claims, Gragg's criteria will adequately identify the early school leaver, the problem of the drop-out is at least partially solved. Unfortunately there is wide disagreement among investigators as to the characteristic distinctive traits. It has already been noted that Gragg includes sex - more boys than girls drop, membership in broken homes and a family background of low education completion as symptomatic of drop-out potentiality.[5] Woellner lists low economic status and no part-time job as contributing factors.[6] Both agree on retardation or a marked regression in grades in the years immediately preceding the actual withdrawal; both list non-participation in extra-curricular activities; and both state that a lack of general ability, Gragg calls it verbal intelligence, great enough to place the pupil in the lowest one-fifth of his class increased his drop-potential. Dillon's study, which is possibly the most complete yet attempted, would agree on the first two causative factors, but would give only dubious

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[5]William Lee Gragg, "Some Factors Which Distinguish Drop-Outs from High School Graduates," Occupations, 27: 457-459, April, 1949.

[6]R. C. Woellner, "Early School Leavers," School Review, 59:511, December, 1951.

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support to the last. He states that "uniformly low intelligence test scores do not seem to be characteristic of the early school leaver."[7] His tables show that 5 per cent of school leavers in his study had I.Q.'s above 114 and nearly 20 per cent had I.Q.'s above 105. However, 60 per cent had I.Q.'s below 95, which would seem to indicate that a low mental capacity cannot be entirely discounted.

Three Major Factors Presented

An interesting coincidence in the Rapid City study showed the results of the Terman McNemer and Otis Beta tests given there also ranking 5 per cent of the drop-outs, for whom test scores were available, as above 114. A partial explanation of the local figure may be found in the fact that almost half of these higher I.Q.'s, 40 per cent, left school because of marriage, a point which will be discussed further in a later chapter.

A more serious aspect of the results of this study was the figure obtained on the low I.Q.'s, which revealed only 30 per cent of the early leavers as having I.Q.'s below ninety-five, whereas Dillon's findings were almost twice that. This figure would indicate that most of the Rapid City drop-outs had the capacity for, and could have profited from, continued schooling. Another arresting sidelight was the discovery that only 6 per cent of the drops had I.Q.'s

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[7]Dillon, op. cit., p. 34.

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lower than were found among the graduates. Mental ability would, therefore, seem to be of minor importance in Rapid City High School as a reason for withdrawing before completion of the course. Graph No. 1, on page 30 contrasting the I. Q.'s of the members of the class of 1954 who graduated with those of the class members who did not finish illustrates the minimum of importance to be placed on capacity or lack of it as a reason for withdrawal.

The second reason for withdrawal, that of failure to participate in school activities could not be investigated for the drop-outs in the local study because no record is kept of individual extra-curricular memberships until the senior year. However, a poll of the teachers yielded the unanimous opinion that, with the possible exception of music, which is included in the curriculum in the Rapid City system, the drop-outs, as listed, had not taken a perceptible part in school activities outside the regular classroom.[8]

The survey of the local situation disclosed only inadequate figures on retardation or failure, the last of the three reasons for withdrawal generally agreed upon. No record had been kept of the seventy-four between-term losses, those pupils who simply failed to enroll in the succeeding

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[8]The sponsor of the largest and most inclusive of the girls' organizations in Senior High School, the Y-Teens, states that only six of the names among the drop-outs were familiar to her as having ever been included on the Y-Teen membership roll. Of those six, four were girls who dropped school to be married.

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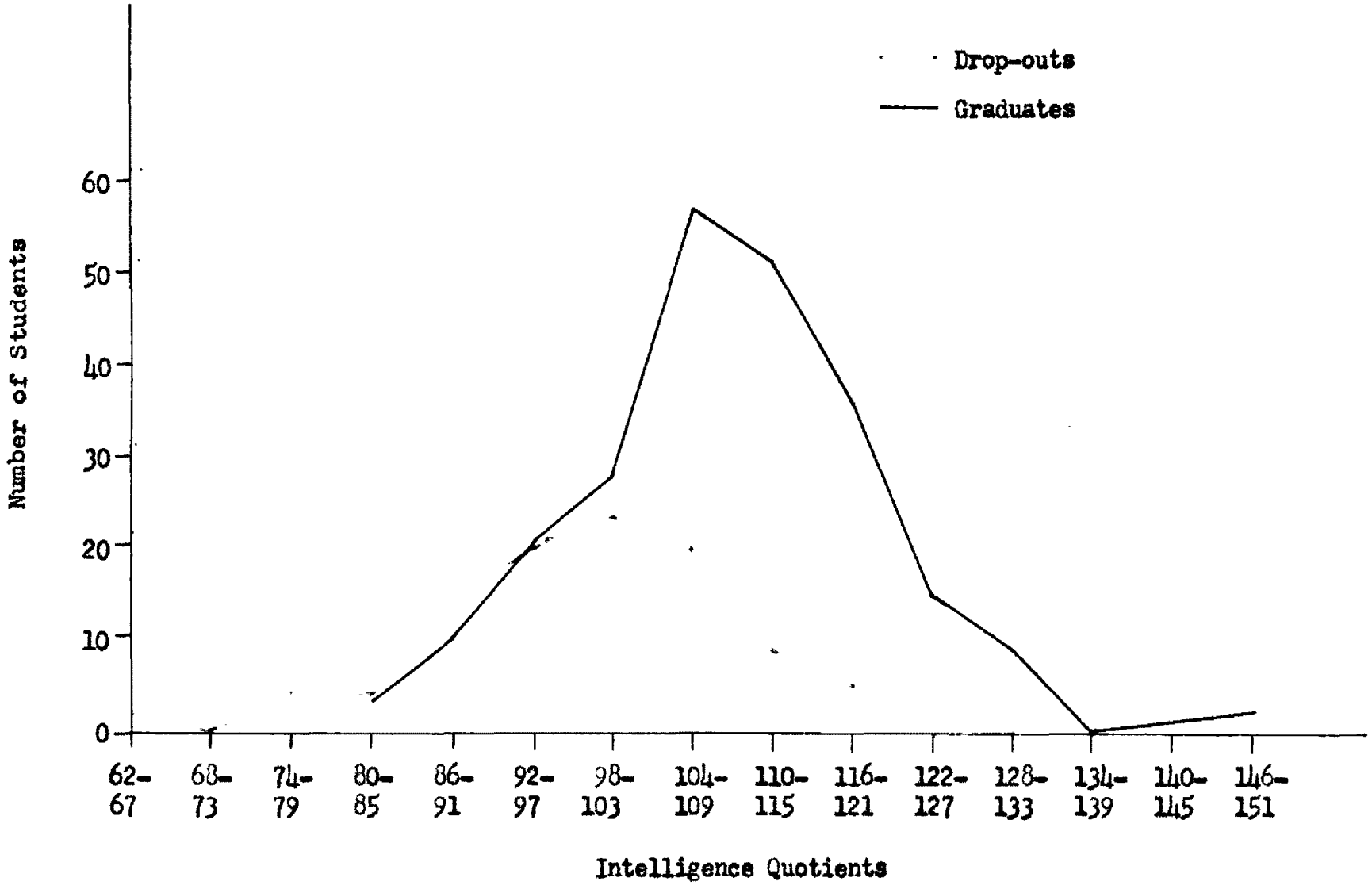

FIGURE 1: Comparison of the IQ's of Graduates and Drop-outs.

semester but never officially dropped. In addition, there were those who did not remain in school long enough to receive either failing or passing grades in any of their subjects. When the investigation of the drop-cards was completed, it was found that adequate grade averages were obtainable for only 119 of the 217 drops. Less than a semester's grade in the given subject was not considered adequate. Of these 119, eighty-eight had failing records, varying from failure in one or two subjects to retardation of an entire year. Thirty-one had no failing record, though two of these had an E or minimum passing average in all subjects. Of the remaining twenty-nine who had average grades or only slightly below, the reasons given for quitting school were both interesting and illuminating. One dropped because of serious ill-health; one was sent to the State School of Correction; neither of which could be called a voluntary reason for withdrawal. One girl was forced to leave school to care for an ill father and small children in the home while her mother worked to support the family; several gave lack of interest as a reason, and thirteen, 50 per cent of the remainder, dropped school to be married. The most important reason for the non-failing student to leave school, according to the above figures would appear to be marriage.

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The Drop-Out As An Individual

On the other hand, not all students leaving school to be married had either passing grades nor average intellectual capacity. The drop-out is an individual, not a statistic. Dillon's study of the thirteen hundred early school-leavers in five communities in Michigan, Indiana and Ohio indicates nothing more clearly than that the early school-leaver is an individual, a composite result of his own hereditary make-up, his home background and his school environment. Each of these sets up a chain reaction. The home is what it is because of the hereditary background of the child and his parents; from reason of that home environment, the child reacts differently to the school situation, thus developing a greater potential for withdrawal, accommodation or participation. No one factor appears to be constant as a major cause for leaving school before graduation. Educators, like Woellner and Dillon, admit that statistical averages betoken end results, not primary causes. Many factors not apparent in a statistical average may be of prime importance to the individual student. Dillon brings out this point in his discussion of whether more boys than girls are early school-leavers.

> Some studies have indicated that boys constitute a higher percentage of the school-leavers than girls. Where this is the case, several factors might have a bearing on it, such as what percentage boys are of the total high school population in comparison with girls;

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> whether more jobs are available for boys and at higher wages than for girls; whether curriculum offerings are more varied for boys than for girls.[9]

The importance of better understanding of the individual student and his idiosyncrasies is increasingly stressed as the studies of the potential drop-out become more widespread.

Importance of Teacher-Pupil Relationship

There would seem to be no substitute for the concerned interest of the teacher in the individual pupil, an empathy that gives the student a sense of his own importance in the general school world and thus enables him to make an adequate adjustment to the particular situation he faces. Often so slight a thing as one skilled interview with a wise teacher or counselor will dissuade the avowed drop-out from actually quitting.[10]

Realizing this importance of the proficient consultation, Rapid City High School insists on a terminal interview with every pupil before a drop card is issued. (This rule cannot, of course, be made to apply to the pupil who simply fails to register at the beginning of a new semester.) Usually such interviews are conducted by a guidance counselor or principal, but occasionally, if there is a definite antagonism on the part of the pupil toward the administration, the interview is delegated to a teacher in

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[9]Dillon, op. cit., p. 23.

[10]See Appendix, Case Study No. 1.

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whose classes the would-be drop has had reasonable success. This assumes that such a teacher has had some training or experience in guidance work. It is not enough for the novice to take an expert's interview sheet and attempt to delve into the personal background of the early school-leaver. The interview can be damaging or helpful in exact proportion to the wisdom of the counselor. There is nothing static or absolute about the drop-out. Statistics will never show exactly why a student does not care to stay in school, statistics can give only the clues on which the trained personnel worker can make his approach. With adequate wisdom and training on the part of the interviewer, the exit interview often yields rich dividends even when the pupil remains firm in his decision to withdraw from school. The decision to drop out is a critical step, but it may be less serious if the final interview has been so planned as to persuade the student to consider return to his studies after the present exigency has been served. The best interest of "the whole child" may sometimes be better promoted if he is allowed to withdraw from the school which, for the moment, constitutes a situation he is unable to solve.

The term drop-out has perhaps become an educator's bugaboo. It need not mean an irretrievable loss. If the way has been left open, the one-time leaver may return when the need for further training makes itself felt. In night

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school or by extension he may complete his high school course with increased value to himself because he now wishes to use the knowledge he is voluntarily acquiring. The sober concern of the schools of the United States over the 40 per cent to 50 per cent of their membership which they fail to hold may have blinded them to the vital need of the individual member thus lost.

Responsibility Readiness

In a recent article in the Saturday Evening Post, Dr. Betts, an eminent authority on reading deficiencies, is quoted as saying that the gravest weakness of modern education is regimentation. "Modern, stream-lined education," he says, "tries to mass educate children without any regard to the way in which children's minds grow and learn."[11] This weakness is perhaps not confined to the elementary grades nor to the teaching of reading. There may be a responsibility readiness as well as a reading readiness and, while no tests have yet been devised to grade it, that responsibility readiness may, in the final analyses, determine whether or not the student remains at his job in high school until it is completed. If the student has not yet matured to the acceptance of responsibility, it is possible that urging he remain in the school system, against his own desire to do so, is just as much an example of regimentation as is

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[11]David G. Wittels, "Are We Failing Our Children?" Saturday Evening Post, 226:26, March 6, 1954.

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that Dr. Betts gives of the fifth grade reading class with their books all open at the same spot.[12]

Potential drop-out John Jones may be responsibility-matured; if so, counselling should find the particular problem which is causing the trouble and adjust the school curriculum and the student's viewpoint for the satisfactory solution of that problem.[13] No demand for flexibility in the school program should be too great in such a case. But potential drop-out Sally Jane may not yet have matured to the acceptance of responsibility in the act of learning.[14] Just as some of Dr. Betts' pupils in the second and even in the third grade were not yet ready to learn to read, so some of the high school students are not yet ready to accept learning as a matter of responsibility on their part. If these high school students are forced or bribed, or in any way induced to remain in school, will this automatically bring about maturation of accountability? Does it produce reading readiness in the third grade pupil to force him to remain at his desk after school, or to excuse him from reading recitation if he will plait more May baskets during reading period? Certain basic skills are recognized for which there is no substitute, and reading is one of them. May there not also be certain basic character traits for

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Appendix, Case History No. 2.

[14] Appendix, Case History, No. 3.

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which there is no replacement in the educative process, and responsibility be one of those traits? If this should be true, the general conclusions on the necessity of keeping the entire 50 per cent of drop-outs in school is a "basket-plaiting" fallacy. The unwilling student is forced by parental compulsion and social pressure to remain, unresponding and unconvinced, a member of his graduating class. He is, perhaps, released from any type of regulation curricula, uninhibitory as such curricular requirements are in the modern high school, and is offered instead some busy work in snap courses. It would appear to be a dubious conjecture to draw the conclusion that the diploma he will one day receive will have the magical effect of producing responsibility for work and for knowledge where no such responsibility existed before.

One of the outstanding consistencies in all interviews with early school-leavers, after they have left school, is the regret they express at not having completed their course. One and all, they state that failure to complete school has constituted a definite hazard for them to overcome in the business world. The job world appears to be a good developer of responsibility readiness and the school can meet this challenge of the world of business by making skill-training and knowledge easily accessible to the drop-out, now matured and become a voluntary learner. If less effort were spent on keeping the potential drop-out in school, when he doesn't want to stay in school, and more

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effort were spent in making school available to him in night classes and extension courses, when he has matured to the point of responsibility readiness; the public school might come nearer to its goal of responsible citizens as its product.

Whether the study of the early school-leaver is general or intensive, the results offer no easy solution. It is an individual problem and the results are individually arrived at. It is a problem of long-term planning and patient solution, that begins with the first sign of the potential drop-out, and does not necessarily end in failure even though the pupil is temporarily lost to the school.

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CHAPTER IV

A STUDY OF THE DROP-OUT WITHIN THE FRAME OF THE LOCAL SCHOOL SITUATION: MINOR FACTORS

A few of the factors not generally agreed upon as causes for early school leaving are stressed by certain investigators as of primary importance. Ellsworth Tompkins, Specialist for the Large High School in the United States Office of Education, believes the personality of the teacher to be a conspicuous part of the holding power of any school, and lists a cooperative attitude, kindliness, patience, wide interests including an interest in the problem of the pupil himself, and impartiality, as necessary personal characteristics if the instructor can be counted an asset.[1]

No educator would minimize the importance of the teacher's personality in all phases of school work; but the question of validity in any type of teacher rating has not been proved to the satisfaction of the teacher, the administrator, or the public. Until that controversy has been settled, objective evaluation of such a factor is not available to the ordinary investigator.

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[1]Ellsworth Tompkins, "How Can the School Reduce the Number of Early School Leavers," Bulletin of National Association of Secondary School Principals, 35:307-318, March, 1951.

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Three of the other factors, herein listed as minor because of the lack of agreement as to their importance, are: the hidden costs of schooling, the preponderance of drops in a given year, usually the ninth or tenth grade, and membership in a minority group. Each of these was considered in the local study; and, although the field was limited, points of agreement or disagreement with more complete investigations may have substantive bearing.

Hidden Costs of Schooling

James E. Nancarrow, Principal of Upper Darby High School in Pennsylvania, and Professor Harold C. Hand of the University of Illinois, who supervised the Illinois State Holding Power Study for Secondary Schools, agree that the cost of the high school program deters many students from graduating. Nancarrow lists it first in the reasons given by the leavers themselves.[2] Hand feels that, up to the present time, it has "been an accident of economic birth" that too often determines whether or not a child can graduate from high school.[3] From a sampling of course charges and extra-curricular fees, Hand estimated the probable average yearly cost per pupil to be around $125; ranging from $95 for a freshman to over $150 for seniors.

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[2]James E. Nancarrow, "Reducing Drop-Outs," Bulletin National Association of Secondary School Principals, 34: 183-188, December, 1950.

[3]Harold C. Hand, "For Whom Are High Schools Designed," Educational Leadership, 5:359-373, March, 1949.

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An editorial in the Rapid City Daily Journal, dated July 24, 1953, quotes an article by Willard Hawkins, in The Nation's Schools, in which he recommends that a study be made of these "hidden tuitions."[4] The admission fees for plays and athletic events, the cost of materials used in the scientific and vocational courses, the gym suits, the play costumes, the school newspaper, the school parties, the gifts for teachers, all figure in the hidden costs and all add up to "real money" in any school. The answer to the problem is not easy, but an analysis of the actual expenses in each school is an initial step.

A start was made in Rapid City High School by having a group of seniors keep an expense account as a part of the regular requirements of the sociology course. Twenty-six girls and thirteen boys completed a conscientious account of all money paid out, which they would not have spent had they not been members of the high school. Hand's investigation was conducted in 1949. In spite of the rise in costs since then, the median amount spent by these seniors, $129.67, did not reach the average of $150, estimated by Hand. However, the boys spent $140.25, while the median amount spent by the girls was considerably less than that, $119.10.

The median amount spent was used in the estimation of costs rather than the average amount, because there was so wide a variation in the spending of individuals. The amount

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[4]Willard L. Hawkins, "Can Parents Afford to Send Their Children to High School," Nation's Schools, 52:55-57, July, 1953.

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spent on admissions for plays and athletic events, for example, ranged from fifty cents to thirty-two dollars, the last figure being that of a boy who followed the basketball team to most of the out-of-town games. The median figure, however, considering all admissions, and probably very near what the average student spent, was $4.25, the price of a season ticket to all events held in the local high school. In like vein, school supply costs varied from $1.56 to $13.25, depending on whether a student was taking a secretarial or vocational course, or the standard high school curriculum. On one item all students paid alike. An initial deposit of $3.00 was charged to cover possible loss of books or breakage of school materials. To make sure the costs were inclusive, this charge was included in the accounts, although if no misfortune occurs during the year the student is repaid his $3.00 the last week of school.

If a judgment is to be made from the table on page 43, the hidden costs for a freshman or sophomore in Rapid City High School are less than $20.00 for either the boys or the girls. (See first subtotal: girls, $19.50; boys $15.75.) Expenses rise the next year, particularly if the junior attends the annual prom, in which case the total for the year is around $100.00; the girls spending $83.85 and the boys $100.75. In the senior year, with the additional expenses contingent upon graduation, the costs, as mentioned before, are still well within the reach of any boy or girl

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TABLE II

MEDIAN SCHOOL EXPENSES FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS
IN RAPID CITY HIGH SCHOOLS, 1953-1954

Expenditures Students Consider Necessary	Common to all		Juniors and Seniors		Seniors	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Registration deposit	$3.00	$ 3.00				
Season ticket and admissions	4.25	4.25				
School supplies	5.00	9.00				
Club dues	2.50	2.25				
School Annual	1.00	1.00				
School ring			$ 22.50	$18.00		
Prom expenses - not clothes			7.50			
Prom expenses - apparel			55.00	46.35		
Announcements					$ 6.50	$ 6.50
Gowns for graduation					3.00	3.25
Graduation pictures					30.00	25.80
Subtotals for sophomores	$15.75	$19.50				
Subtotals for juniors			$100.75	$83.85		
Subtotals for seniors					$140.25	$119.40
Totals of highest median amount for a single year					$140.25	$119.40

who has had a summer or week-end job, and certainly can be supported easily by the average parental pocketbook.

Finances did not figure as an important cause for leaving school in the local study and the cost chart illustrates why. There are no sororities nor fraternities allowed in the school; clubs are urged to keep their dues down to around fifty cents a semester, and usually do. Admission fees are kept small by having extra-curricular activities underwritten by the school board whenever necessary. The school administration feels that making belonging to the high school a financial possibility for every young person in the city is a component part of the democracy of the American public school.

Yearly Drop-Out Incidence

Educators have generally conceded that the prospective drop-out is most prone to stop school in the freshman or sophomore year. This is caused, in part, by the fact that the legal age for quitting school usually falls, for the retarded pupil, in those years; and, in part, by the break in the school program that occurs either between eighth and ninth grades, or between junior and senior high school. Dillon found in his study that those two years not only accounted for more leavers than other grades, but also for more failures.[5]

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[5]Harold J. Dillon, Early School Leavers, A Major Educational Problem, National Child Labor Committee Publication No. 401. New York: Moak Printing Company, 1949.

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In a more recent drop-out study made of the class of 1952 in the Austin Junior-Senior High School, Doran L. Warren did not find the high percentage of drops in the ninth year true. In a class which graduated 302 students of the 380 enrolled from the seventh grade on, Warren found that the largest number, 22 per cent, dropped during the junior year; 10 per cent dropped in the senior and also in the sophomore years and only 3 per cent left school in the freshman year.[6]

Since Austin and Rapid City schools are of comparable size it is perhaps not too surprising that a similar result in rate of incidence was obtained in a survey of the latter school. It was found that 29 per cent (.299) of those who dropped high school left during the junior year or the first half of the senior year and 22 per cent (.225) during the tenth grade in the fall quarter or the eleventh grade. Mr. Warren gives no reason for the 32 per cent total from the junior and senior years of his study, a total which shows so definite a variation from the usual drop-out tendency. He indicates, though, that the large percentage of rural students may account, in part, for the disparity.

A breakdown of the reasons, listed for withdrawing, by the Rapid City leavers in those particular years does little to clarify the situation. (See Table on page 46.)

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[6]Doran L. Warren, "Drop Out Study of the Class of 1952, Austin Junior-Senior High School, Austin, Minnesota," (unpublished thesis, University of Minnesota) p. 4.

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TABLE III

TIME OF WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL
BY PUPILS IN RAPID CITY STUDY

Year of Withdrawal	Boys No.	Boys Per-centage	Girls No.	Girls Per-centage	Total No.	Total Per-centage
Left during last half of 7th grade	26	11.9	15	6.9	41	18.8
Left during 8th grade or fall qtr. of 9th	22	10.1	14	6.4	36	16.5
Left during 9th grade or fall qtr. of 10th	15	6.9	11	5.	26	11.9
Left during 10th grade or fall qtr. of 11th	22	10.1	27	12.4	49	22.5
Left during 11th grade or 1st sem. of 12th	30	13.8	35	16.1	65	29.9
Totals	115		102		217	

TABLE IV

REASONS GIVEN FOR WITHDRAWAL BY PUPILS IN
11TH AND 12TH GRADES IN RAPID CITY

Reason given for withdrawal	No.	Percentage
Needed at home	1	1.6
Had to go to work	2	3.
Failing	2	3.
Enlisted in Armed Services	3	4.6
Ill health	3	4.6
Did not enter	9	13.8
Marriage	14	21.5
Lack of interest	14	21.5
Would give no reason	17	26.
Totals	65	99.6

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Of the drop-outs, fourteen, 21.5 per cent, withdrew because of an avowed lack of interest and an equal number withdrew because of marriage. This last figure (14) amounts to 70 per cent of the total number of withdrawals resulting from marriage throughout the six years; as it seems logical it should do. If marriage is an increasing reason for leaving school early, then this may account for a portion of the shift in incidence.

A slightly larger group than those mentioned before, seventeen, or 26 per cent, of these upper-class drops would give no reason for discontinuing school, not even mentioning lack of interest. Nine, 13.8 per cent, simply failed to enter school their senior year.

These between-term losses, or failures to enter, pose a puzzling problem for the investigator and his statistics. Such a student is a drop-out from the standpoint of the local school, yet it is quite possible that he has entered high school in another town or enrolled in a private school within the city. Two of the senior-year losses listed were known to have entered the Catholic high school in Rapid City, but no transcript of credits was requested from the public schools. This may happen in numerous instances; many smaller high schools have accepted a report card in lieu of a high school transcript. Nevertheless, it would seem a fallacy to assume such re-entries, therefore, the failures to enter are counted throughout the local study as genuine

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drops. A partial rationalization of the total accruing is granted, however, in listing those who withdrew and those who did not enter under separate headings in all tables, as is done in the Illinois Holding Study.[7]

Other than the reasons already mentioned, there was no significant consensus among the leavers as to why they left, and the actual rate of incidence in the earlier years paralleled closely the findings of both Warren and Dillon, even to showing, as does Dillon's study, a larger percentage of girls than boys remaining in school up through the fall quarter of the tenth grade. In spite of this apparent agreement on a part of the deductions there seems to be little signification in the studies conducted recently on the yearly incidence of leavers.

Membership in Minority Groups

Educational leaders appear to be divided on the question of whether membership in a minority group affects the individual potential for leaving school before graduation. Gragg recognizes racial stock merely as a non-significant factor;[8] Woellner treats it only as a concomitant

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[7]Charles M. Allen, How to Conduct the Holding Power Study, Illinois Secondary School Curriculum Program, Bulletin No. 3. Springfield, Illinois, Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, May, 1949.

[8]William Lee Gragg, "Some Factors Which Distinguish Drop-Outs from High School Graduates," Occupations, 27:457-459, 1949.

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of low family economic status;[9] but the Illinois Holding Study rates it a separate causal table, when that minority is coupled with a difference in skin coloration.[10]

In Rapid City, the only minority group making an appreciable impact upon the community is the Indian population, which is expected to number around 5,000 by 1955. The Indian child has already caused a critical attendance and drop-out problem throughout the school system, but it was found in the course of this study that most of the actual drop-outs occur before the seventh grade. Of the 217 drops included in this investigation, seventeen were either Indian or Mexican, representing slightly under 8 per cent (.078) of the total. When it is considered that the Indian population is, at present, believed to be about 8½ per cent of the total population of the town, the percentage of drop would seem to represent an average comparable to that of the white child; but this is not the complete picture. The number of Indian graduates in the class of 1953 was but three, a ratio of one to every one hundred white children, not eight to every one hundred as the population proportions would indicate. Moreover, of the total Indian enrollment in that class, this means that 85 per cent dropped before graduation; a figure which has all the earmarks of complete

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[9]R. C. Woellner, "Early School Leaver," School Review, 59:511, December, 1951.

[10]Charles M. Allen, op. cit., pp. 63-66.

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failure in the school's holding power for the minority group.

In reality, the situation is not so serious as it appears. Until the last ten years, an Indian who completed the high school course of study was unusual enough to merit public attention in the press and elsewhere. Today, one or several Indian graduates each year are a commonplace. The school works quietly and determinedly against any form of racial distinction or segregation, even going so far as to eliminate the nationality response from the registration cards. Each Indian entrant is given the benefit of individual counselling concerning the course in which he or she should be most fitted to succeed and a schedule of subjects well within the range of his or her individual capacity is carefully worked out. This is done whether the pupil remains in the class for the full six years, or like Maxine Loves War, stays in school less than twelve hours. Any talent apparent in the child's previous school records is developed to the full extent of the school's capacity. One of this year's graduates was a valued soloist in the school chorus. The athletic department is often able to exert a holding power that the academic courses lack, though it may become too successful in focusing the interest of a school boy. Hobart Lonehill became so excellent an amateur boxer that he gave up school to become a professional.

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School is still not important to the Oglala Sioux who constitute the Indian group represented in Rapid City. This is not strange; they have been under the influence of formal schooling for less than four generations. The first government boarding school on the Pine Ridge Reservation opened in 1881,[11] and the government busses still take the responsibility of seeing that the day-school scholar comes to school. The parents assume no responsibility for the child's education, a general factor (i.e., lack of parental cooperation) which is listed as a primary cause of early school leaving by some authorities and which is a decided handicap to the public school in this case because of the necessity of sending a truant officer almost daily to some of the shacks and tents. Ben Reifel, the first Indian ever to serve as government agent of South Dakota's largest Indian reservation, Pine Ridge, expressed particular concern over this failure of many Indian parents to keep their children in school unless forced to do so. "The hope of our people," he said, "rests in the souls and minds of our young people . . . . for us Indians education is next to Godliness. The hope of the Sioux people does not rest in treaties and handouts from the government, but in the education of our boys and girls."[12] Dr. Reifel is a Harvard

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[11]G. F. E. Lindquist, The Red Man in the United States. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923.

[12]Feature Article in the Rapid City (South Dakota) Daily Journal, April 11, 1954.

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graduate, who is a leader among his people. He and other educated Sioux are tackling the problem of the Indian drop-out by attempting an indoctrination of the parents in the value of education. Another generation or two may find the parental influence cooperating with the public school, and the holding power will be partly solved.

In the meantime, Rapid City is carrying on an active campaign to make the Indian child at home in the public schools. An example of this is found in the summer recreation program. Playgrounds are set up in various sections of the city. Since the Indians, like the whites, tend to congregate in neighborhoods, it follows that one playground will be preponderantly white and another Indian; but the Mayor's Committee on Human Relations has a solution for that. Every day for a week the members of the Indian playground are picked up in trucks and taken to a white neighborhood where they spend the morning learning to know the white children they will have as classmates when school begins in September. The next week, the Indian playground remains at home to act as host to members of a white playground, so that white children, too, may learn that differences in skin coloration make no difference in playmates.

Much of what has been discussed is, of course, at grade school rather than high school level; but the solution of the high school holding power, in this instance, begins

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in the grade school and in the home. It is, after all, a community problem and the responsibility for its solution lies not merely with the school administration but with the whole citizenry. It is the whole minority problem in microcosm.

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CHAPTER V

MARRIAGE AS A SPECIFIC CAUSE OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

The causes for the early school-leaver within the frame of the local situation, as represented in the Rapid City High School, followed quite closely both the major and the minor factors as outlined in the more representative general studies. This would seem to indicate that the Rapid City school was an average high school in an average community and problems that assumed importance there might well be important in other schools of like size across the nation. This surmise was the justification for choosing one specific causative factor in the problem of the drop-out and attempting to discover whether this factor affects other schools in other states, and, if so, what steps they have taken to combat it.

The reasons for choosing marriage as the factor to be studied in this way are quite obvious. Throughout the course of this study there has apparently been one outstanding cause for the competent student's withdrawal from school before graduation. That cause is marriage. It was given as the motive for leaving by over 9 per cent of all drop-outs and by almost 20 per cent (.1980) of the girls, ranking third among the explanations given by those for whom records were available. The only two responses superseding it were

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the indefinite excuse of lack of interest and a refusal to give any reason whatsoever. (See Table I., p. 23.) Marriage accounted for 40 per cent of the pupils with I.Q.'s above 114 who did not stay to complete the course. More than that, it is a specific cause, one on which the investigator can "put his finger." It neither overlaps other causes nor is complicated by them, and it affects largely that group of students who are best able to benefit from further schooling.

Importance

Marriage is a factor in early school-leaving, primarily among the girls, that has become increasingly important since World War II. Statistics show that the number of marriages among girls under twenty has shown a definite increase from 1940 to 1950. A large proportion of these girls who marry drop school, either voluntarily or because the school system requires it. These girls do not commonly have the characteristics of the usual early leaver. Their I.Q. is most often average or above. Unless the love affair preceding the marriage has interfered, their grades do not show customary retardation or regression. Such girls are as prone to come from homes with high educational background as from homes of low scholastic completion; they are by no means confined to the lowest economic decile and their responsibility readiness, or their emotional willingness to work may have been one of the reasons for the early marriage.

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Certainly this responsibility readiness often has evidenced itself in their participation in school activities.

In most cases, the marriage-drop is in a category by itself and it is a category that, because of its very difference, has become progressively important in the consideration of the educator. Dillon did not include it among his reasons for early school-withdrawal, but more recent investigators[1] consider it important enough to list as a definite causal classification.[2] Nancarrow, writing as early as 1950, in a condensed summary of reasons for dropping school lists marriage sixth.[3] This growing concern is not confined to the educators alone. Business men who hire the bride, who must work to augment the family budget, and even the women's commentator in a daily paper have voiced anxiety that the potential mothers of the coming generation are allowed or forced to lose any part of the high school training so necessary in today's world.

A part of the criticism aroused stems from the fact that the married student's withdrawal is not always voluntary; some schools refuse to admit such a student because

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[1]Wilson H. Ivins, uncompleted study on student marriage in New Mexico, Department of Secondary Education, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

[2]Doran L. Warren, "Drop Out Study of the Class of 1952, Austin Junior-Senior High School, Austin, Minnesota" (unpublished thesis, University of Minnesota) p. 6.

[3]James E. Nancarrow, "Reducing Drop-Outs," National Association Secondary School Principals Bulletin, 34:183-188, December, 1950.

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she is married. One young wife, within a semester of completing her course in a midwestern high school, returned to her parents' home in Vermont when her husband was sent overseas. She found that the only way she could complete her high school work in her home town was to reassume her maiden name and enroll as single. The local school ruling forbade the attendance of married students. In order to partially ascertain how widespread such restrictions were in the United States, a questionnaire concerning the married student was prepared.[4]

Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire was simple in form; three questions were asked each school: (1) "Did marriage constitute a problem as a cause for school withdrawals," (2) "Did the school impose restrictions on the married student," and (3) "If such restrictions were imposed what was the nature of them?" Questionnaires were sent to two cities in each state. The cities were chosen at random from an atlas, the only standard being that they be ofaverage size, i.e., from ten to fifty thousand. This was not always possible. In Delaware, for example, it was necessary to use a small town of 5,000 or have both experimental cities well over 100,000. Then, too, the atlas from which the original choice was made was a 1940 issue; when the figures were checked with

[4]See Appendix B, Questionnaires.

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the 1950 census some of the towns chosen had grown enormously. Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was the outstanding surprise; her population had increased from 34,700 to 125,629. Generally speaking, however, the towns chosen were of medium size and should offer a spot check of the attitude in such communities throughout the United States toward marriage among high school students.

The results were rewarding. Of the ninety-six questionnaires mailed out eighty-four were returned, at least one from every state. One answer was not usable; it came from Fort Benning, Georgia, where a questionnaire had been sent in an attempt to determine the attitude to be found within an army installation. The answer explained that Fort Benning maintained only an elementary school so could not qualify for the investigation. However, one of the towns from the neighboring state of Tennessee replied that the state law prohibited the exclusion of married students from high school but that married students were refused admittance in the elementary grades. Perhaps the marriage problem has merely not yet arisen in the Fort Benning grade schools.

When the answers were tabulated, as was done in Table V, page 59, the results showed that, of the eighty-three schools representing forty-eight states, forty-two placed some sort of a restriction on the married students or did not allow them to attend; while forty-one applied no limitation to the married students which was not applied to

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TABLE V

TABULATION OF SCHOOLS REPORTING ON RESTRICTIONS REGARDING THE ATTENDANCE OF MARRIED STUDENTS

Regulations as reported	No. of individual school systems	No. of states represented in reports of individual systems
No regulation concerning attendance of married students	41	31
Percentage without restriction	49 per cent (.4939)	64 per cent (.6458)
Regulations as given		
1. Married student requested to drop	3	3
2. Married student advised to drop	2	2
3. Requested to drop only if obviously pregnant	18	16
4. Must be temporarily suspended	2	2
5. Cannot enroll if 21 and married	1	1
6. May finish current year, then drop	1	1
7. Not required to attend	1	1
8. Must obtain authority's permission to attend (school board or administrator)	7	6
9. Must keep up grades and attendance	3	3
10. Must not participate in extra-curricular activities	1	1
11. Must comply with comprehensive program of regulations	2	2
12. Only one member of married couple may attend	1	1
Total of schools restricting attendance	42	35*
Percentage with restriction	50 per cent (.5060)	73 per cent (.7291)
Total number of schools reporting	83	48

*Note that both restrictive and non-restrictive systems are often found in the same state, and that the 2 systems polled within a state did not often agree on restrictive requirements.

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other school members as well. A cursory glance shows that many states must both regulate and not regulate the married student; no agreement in policy is evident even within the borders of the individual state. Public opinion, as represented by the eighty-three school administrations seemed to be about equally divided, almost 51 per cent (.506) feeling that there should be some difference in the treatment accorded a married student, and slightly over 49 per cent believing the public schools were intended for married and unmarried students alike. This opinion of the individual schools, as has been noted, in nowise reflected state opinion. Actually 31 states or 64 per cent of the forty-eight were represented in the schools without restrictions, while thirty-five or almost 73 per cent were represented by schools which had restrictions of some type. The sum of 64 per cent and 73 per cent is much more than 100 per cent, thus the obvious first finding from the questionnaire was that most states do not have a uniform state-wide policy concerning the married student. Duplicate restrictive reports came only from the three states of Minnesota, Nebraska, and Connecticut.

Often where the states do have a general policy such as Utah's policy of dismissal for too frequent absences, the local school system is apparently allowed to set up its specific regulations to methodize the ruling. One Utah school reported only that a married student must be regular

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in attendance to remain in school; the other reporting school from Utah demanded not only regular attendance but also that scholarship be maintained in the course agreed upon with the principal, that judgment be used in association with single girls and that periodic consultations be had with the Dean. These divergent policies all stem from the absence law and the fact that the Utah state law declares that a married person is "excused from school attendance."

This lack of a consistent state-wide policy places the married student pretty much at the mercy of the individual school administrator. He may have the kindly interest of the school principal who replied to the question on regulations in the questionnaire by saying that he did not feel "simply because a student married he would have any less need for a high school diploma"; or the understanding of the dean of women who felt that "education should not stop because of marriage, and anything we can do to help (such as work permits for necessary home duties) should be done." On the other hand the school authority may be vested in the hands of one who feels as did one supervisor who replied to the same question by stating flatly, "School and home life do not mix," or who feels as did the man in a northern state, who had no married students, hence no regulations, but indicated his attitude by the remark that he did not believe marriage to be "proof of incorrigibility."

The specific restrictions employed by the forty-two

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schools differed considerably; the most widely used requesting a girl to drop school if obviously pregnant. However, many schools making this regulation did not feel that it was a restriction applying to the attendance of married students; one administrator taking care to explain that a pregnant girl was required to drop, whether married or single. Two schools avoided this particular problem by requiring a girl to drop for a semester after the semester in which she was married or to drop for a year after marriage.

A survey of Table V on page 59 exhibits the wide range of restrictions involving the married student, varying from complete expulsion to forbidding enrollment if the student is twenty-one as well as married. Perhaps the ruling permitting the greatest possibility of injustice to the student was that found in seven school systems in six different states which required the married student to obtain individual permission from someone in authority in order to attend school. This requirement would seem to be particularly dangerous when that authority lies outside the control of the school personnel, who presumably know the student, and is placed in the hands of the local school board, as it is in Connecticut. School boards are not always guidance-minded, although one response from Connecticut points out that a young person's future is perhaps safer when left to the decision of several rather than to

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that of one individual. "Responsibility for such students (i.e., married students) should rest with an official board and not with an official administrator."

One of the most interesting replies on restrictive policies came from the state of Georgia, from a school system which prohibits married students from attending and still has a marriage drop of less than 1 per cent. The school maintains an adult education department which offers all the regular high school courses and it is the philosophy of the administration that the married student should attend the adult education department rather than high school. "He (i.e., the married student) has assumed an adult role, so why not go to school with adults?" The school believes that this policy has kept marriage among their students to a minimum.

This attitude seems to be fairly common throughout the South. South Carolina reported admitting only one member of the married couple, presumably so the responsibility of support could be assumed by the other. Interestingly enough, in the chivalrous South, it may be either the boy or the girl who comes to school. Arkansas, in one school reporting, prohibited participation in extra-curricular activities to impress on the student that marriage responsibilities precluded play. The West Virginia school checked did not question or, in any way, note the marriage of any student in the belief that if such attention were paid them

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"there would be others who would get married merely to attract attention." On the other hand, this school tries to develop the responsibility necessary for marriage in courses on marriage and child care.

Five of the systems reporting felt that the married student should be allowed to attend only so long as he or she was willing to assume full responsibility -- as a married adult? -- for keeping up grades and attendance. One school even specified "no tardiness." Limitations of this type seem to be more characteristic of the West than of other parts of the nation. Such limitations were reported from California, New Mexico, Utah, Texas, and Wyoming. Such a position could be a residue of the western attitude that a man had a right to independent action so long as he, himself, could support that action. The converse viewpoint was also evinced by some of the western states. Idaho works with married students on special programs and sometimes releases them for parts of days to fulfill the responsibilities contingent upon marriage, and a second town in California particularly encourages married students to continue in attendance if at all possible, feeling that "any student who married is in need, or may some day be in serious need of a high school diploma."

These opposing viewpoints seem to be evidence that not only is there no general agreement as to the status of the married student throughout the country, or within a

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given state, but that there is no pervasive philosophy or attitude apparent even in sections of the country usually sharply definitive in thought. New England, ordinarily so homogeneous in its thinking, failed to reveal any consistent policy! New Hampshire does not allow attendance of married students; Maine has no regulations; Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut either advise withdrawal or decide each case on an individual basis. Massachusetts, which advises withdrawal, puts it this way, "There is a problem of social adjustment. Then, too, it seems inadvisable to have a married young man in school associating with freshman or sophomore girls. The age factor is negligible but the maturity through marriage creates more serious problems."

The Far West, noted for its united front on the subject of Progressive Education, disagreed, as has already been noted, within the state of California itself, and Oregon places no limitations on attendance (at least in the two reporting schools) while Washington, at Aberdeen, requests that a girl drop if noticeably pregnant.

This difference in sentiment within the various sections of the country (see Table VI, page 66) connotes either an apparent lack of dependence on public opinion for the evolvement of the regulations on marriage attendance, or that some other factor is responsible for differences occurring in the public's attitude in the local situation.

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TABLE VI

RESTRICTIONS REGARDING ATTENDANCE OF MARRIED STUDENTS LISTED AS TO STATE WHERE EXAMPLE OCCURRED*

Requested to drop school: Georgia, Illinois, New Hampshire	**Advised to drop school:** Massachusetts, New York
Requested to withdraw if obviously pregnant: Arizona, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wyoming	**Must drop for temporary period:** Arizona - 1 semester to yr. Iowa - 1 year
	May finish current year's work only: Missouri
Must obtain permission of authorities: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Indiana, Kansas, Utah, Vermont	**Not required to attend:** Tennessee
	New married students not enrolled if 21: Mississippi
Only one member of married couple may attend: South Carolina	**Must have passing grades:** California, New Mexico
May not participate in extracurricular activities: Arkansas, New Mexico	**Must have regular attendance:** Utah, Texas, Wyoming

*In this chart, comprehensive programs of regulations are broken down and listed under separate requirement headings.

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It is conceivable that a difference in the size of the community itself might account for this disparity; the public paying little attention to the married student in the city high school, and being acutely conscious of such a student in a small-town school. That possibility was not within the limits of this investigation which was directed toward the medium-sized community, yet there was found to be no significant trend in the difference in the attitude of the smaller communities among the towns polled and of the larger ones. Within the limitations of this study, only one factor appeared to account in any way for the dissimilarity in regulation and that was the size of the problem faced by the local school in teen-age marriages. Of course the converse could be true and the size of the problem be due to improper handling or over-concern in the first place, but the logical assumption is that, as the number of married students who were enrolled or who desired to be enrolled, increased, the school felt it incumbent to adopt a policy toward such students. The strictness of the limitations in the policy decided upon seemed somewhat dependent on the magnitude of the drop-out problem accruing.

Varying Incidence in the United States

Table VI, on page 68, shows quite clearly that so long as the problem of the marriage-drop remained under 5 per cent there was little difference in the number of

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TABLE VI

IMPORTANCE OF MARRIAGE AS A CAUSE FOR DROP-OUTS IN SCHOOLS REPORTING

Percentage of total drop-out loss due to marriage	Schools with restrictions on attendance of married students		Schools without restrictions	
	No. reporting	Percentage of total reporting	No. reporting	Percentage of total reporting
1 per cent or less	17	40.47	18	43.90
More than 1 per cent and less than 5	5	11.90	7	11.07
Subtotal of all under 5 per cent	22	53.37	25	60.97
Over 5 per cent	20	47.60	16	39.02
Totals	42	99.97	41	99.99
Over 20 per cent	9	21.42	4	9.75

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schools imposing restrictions and those which did not; over 52 per cent (.5237) of the schools prescribed attendance limitations and over 60 per cent (.6097) listed no restrictions whatever. However when the drop-loss by marriage rose to more than 5 per cent the 8 per cent difference shifted in the other direction and there were 8.5 per cent more schools having restrictions than those not having; and when only the schools with a serious marriage problem were considered, schools where the marriage drop was over 20 per cent, over twice as many schools had restrictions as did not. Such shifting of the ratio probably tends to indicate, not that restriction is 50 per cent responsible for the highest rate of those who leave school to be married, but rather that as the problem becomes more and more serious the school authorities usually become more and more concerned and use every regulation in their power to attempt to control it. This would be borne out by the fact that, with one exception in the schools reporting, schools using definite expulsion, or advice to drop (which would bring about non-voluntary drops and should result in a high marriage drop rate if any restriction does) listed a marriage drop rate of 1 or 2 per cent. The one exception, Blue Grass, Illinois, had only a 12.5 per cent rate which is far below that 20 per cent margin taken as the point indicative of a serious marriage problem. Restrictions placed on the married student, in other words, do not normally cause marriage drops; but

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marriage drops do cause restrictions. The term normally is used since non-voluntary drops per se, were reported in this study in only three of the forty-eight states, and one of these states provides other ways for the student to continue his education.

Reference to Table V, page 59, indicates that all the restrictions except those involving some angle of the pregnancy problem seem formulated to impress upon the student the seriousness of the step he has taken and the responsibilities involved in marriage. The married student no longer has time for the recreational side of school, he will find it necessary to exert extra effort in order to keep his grades and attendance on a par with that of his fellow students, and since he has, by his marriage, declared himself a mature adult, the school will no longer treat him as a child, and will not overlook his too-occasional absences, nor the times the young wife is late because she didn't quite finish the housework on the hour. The hypothesis behind these inhibitions appears to be that such rules will make marriage appear less rosy and therefore cut down the alarming increase in early marriages. The question arises as to whether the increase is in early marriages or in the feeling that the young person should complete a high school course. Leslie A. Kirkendall, Associate Professor of Family Life Education at Oregon State College, believes that marriage in high school is not basically a new problem. "The boy or

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girl used to quit school, . . . now they marry and stay in school,"[5] or, at least, the educators are coming more and more to think that these young people should remain. There is a possibility that teen-age marriage is a fact of some centuries' standing and will not be regulated away no matter how wise the philosophy behind the regulations. Such rules may only help to salve the conscience of the school system which thus makes clear, as one respondent from Iowa explained, that it refuses to "condone teen-age marriage."

The regulations concerning pregnancy are probably the direct outgrowth of public opinion in the given community and represent exactly what the citizens think should be thought concerning school children and marriage. Twenty-six of the answers to the questionnaires stressed the danger in the association of obviously pregnant girls with single boys and girls. If there is such a danger, the point might be made as to whether that danger was not always present even though the girl was neither pregnant nor married. Circumstances alter cases and experience viewpoints. In no one of the six cities adjoining military installations which reported, was any restriction placed on the married student other than that of being dropped because of failure to keep up attendance and grades. City

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[5]Leslie A. Kirkendall, "Now It's Marriage in the High Schools," Education Digest 17:527. December, 1951.

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systems so situated are graduating senior classes whose membership has included a percentage of well over 10 per cent of married students. The Rapid City class mentioned in the local study had had at one time or another almost 15 per cent (.1489) of its members who were married and 6 per cent (.0638) of those married members graduated. The factor that concerns such systems is not that they graduate a married student nor even an obviously pregnant one, but rather that they lost, as drop-outs a larger per cent of their married students than they graduated. The size of their marriage-drop manifests its importance.

Marriage, at least among the girls, would appear to be the largest factual cause for early school-leaving in the over-all picture throughout the country. No state disavowed it as a problem, and only one school system listed zero under the percentage of drop-outs due to marriage. The importance of this critical situation seems to warrant further study.

Dealing with the Problem of the Married Student

Wilson H. Ivins, Associate Professor at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, has for several years been conducting a detailed study of the married high school student in the state of New Mexico. Twenty-five thousand students are included in his study from 148 junior and senior high schools. There were, he states, 378 student

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marriages within this group in 1952-53, and about eighty-eight of every one thousand twelfth grade girls are married. Such figures make a problem of no mean porportions but the policy of New Mexico's schools is as indefinite and non-constructive as that found elsewhere in the United States. To quote Dr. Ivins directly, "Roughly 1/5 of the schools have expulsion or suspension policies (which actually are illegal). Another 1/5 of these schools discourage continued attendance after marriage. None of the schools has an active policy of encouragement beyond counselling."[6]

The picture in New Mexico is a replica of that indicated by spot-check throughout the United States, but detailed studies of the New Mexico type are needed in other states to point out the size of the problem and the complexity produced by the variety of approaches to its solution.

What should be the attitude toward the married student? Is he an incorrigible, a problem in the school membership who, by his own action, has deprived himself of the right to further education at public expense? One Utah questionnaire reply flatly states, "We owe the students no obligation after they marry." A partial answer to such an attitude lies in the fact that the state educates the actual criminal in a penal institution, not from a sense of obligation but because he may then become self-supporting, and,

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[6]Wilson H. Ivins, from a letter regarding his uncompleted study of student marriages in New Mexico.

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therefore, a better community citizen. The married student is in no sense a criminal nor an incorrigible, but the same reasoning might apply in his case. If the public does not give him every chance to become adequately self-supporting, the public penalizes itself by paving the way for the future necessity of hand-outs to a dependent citizen.

Schools dealing cooperatively with married students usually find them good school citizens, who fit into the school pattern as well as the average student. As the principal of the Gulfport, Mississippi, schools puts it, "We feel the married student has a place in our school." If such a student does not it may be that the school is at fault, not the pupil. One Louisiana reply emphasized the conscientiousness of the married student, who usually feels an added compulsion to gain the most possible benefit from his work since he is, in terms of planning and energy, for the first time paying the cost of his own schooling.

If the schools of America have been honest in their concern about the high percentage of drop-outs, here is an area in which they can work with profit, for here, in the marriage drop, is a group of students in increasing numbers, who are leaving school before graduation. They are leaving often, not because they wish to, not because they are lazy or disinterested or unwilling to accept the responsibility for learning, not because of maladjustment or congenital lack of capacity, but because the schools wish them to

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leave, or will do nothing to help them to stay. With mid-Victorian prudery the school administration fears the married student, particularly if pregnant, may have an immoral effect on the other boys and girls, or, with complete indifference to the problems marriage adds, the school augments those problems by listing extra qualifications with which the married student must comply, thus creating an impossible situation for the already overloaded pupil from which there is no recourse but retreat.

It would seem that, unless the limitations placed on the married student are developed in a kindly, constructive spirit, a complete rightabout-face is called for on the part of many school systems which professed themselves apprehensive over the early school-leaver. Not only should a consistent policy be developed on a nation-wide basis, a step which is particularly important for the high school girl who marries a man in the armed services and goes with him about the country, but that policy should include special provisions that will make the regular curriculum practical, not an insurmountable obstacle even for a pregnant girl. Some arrangement could well be made, too, for a special course for the married girl, a course in homemaking and child care comprehensive enough to answer her immediate problems, but not so comprehensive as to shut out the job training and general knowledge so necessary for

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the modern mother who must often help earn the living as well as rear the children.

In this particular area in the problem of early school-leaving the educator is dealing with facts, not emotional reactions or psychological reserve that refuses to give any reason for quitting school. These are facts obtainable on the married school-leaver which, when determined and tabulated, may solve the greater portion of the problem and with it at least 10 per cent of the critical situation in the whole question of the drop-out.

Educators are realizing that here, ready at hand, is a concrete starting point for drop-out elimination. Holding the marriage drop presages a solution which impinges on the more sanguine phases of the entire complex of early school-leaving. The adequate but disinterested pupil, the dollar-ambitious student who can't wait to make his fortune, may each be helped by the curriculum revisions proposed to meet the married student's needs, and by the emphasis placed on responsible maturity. The part-time program which would help solve the problem of the married-leaver would also help solve the problem of the pupil who drops out because he is needed at home or because he must earn enough to help support his brothers and sisters. Once definitely begun, to solve a definite situation, the solution for the problems of one early school-leaver may spread in widening circles to hold, not all, but many of the groups who now withdraw from high school before graduation.

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CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

A study of the sort described in this thesis is so limited in scope that few results can be expected to be definitely ascertained. Even so, any conclusions which may be derived would seem to fall in three categories: (1) suggestions for bettering the local situation, (2) the bearing the local findings may have on the problem as a whole, and (3) the problem areas indicated by the initial survey on marriage as a specific cause for early school-leaving.

The analysis of the holding power in Rapid City High School showed both weakness and strength in the local policies. On the whole, the school ranked as average in the percentage of its drop-outs when compared with the studies made by such investigators as Dillon and Gragg. Compared with the most recent statistics on holding power within the state of South Dakota itself, which give the high school holding power as 74 per cent, Rapid City's showing was not so good.[1] However, South Dakota is an agricultural state with few towns of more than 5,000 population, and all drop-

[1] H. Noll, State Department of Public Instruction, in a news item in the Gate City Guide (Rapid City, South Dakota), July 2, 1954.

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out surveys indicate that higher percentages are found in the larger towns and cities. If the State Department figures are correct, the unfavorable discrepancy may possibly be explained as resulting from the differences to be found in a rural and an urban population.

A part of the strength of Rapid City's holding power comes from the close personal relationship maintained by the two counselors with the individual student; and it is further enhanced by the flexibility of the curriculum, particularly in the Industrial Relations program which makes it possible for a student to work half days. An additional force for retention is the terminal interview which, if it does not succeed in persuading the student to remain in school, leaves the way open for his return if he decides later to complete his course. Credit must also be given to the administration policy which keeps down the hidden costs of schooling by providing free textbooks and requiring that any charge pertaining to extracurricular activities be kept to the minimum. Perhaps the attitude of the school on two controversial aspects of the problem might also be mentioned as helpful. One is the feeling that marriage does not change a student's need for a high school education, and that such a student should be assisted rather than hampered in completing his course. The other is the belief that young people should not be bribed or seduced into remaining in school against their will, but that the school would

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better await the maturing of the student's need and responsibility to the point where he voluntarily undertakes to obtain the necessary credits and knowledge because he now desires both.

The principal weakness within the local system was found in the number of summer-drops. Some effort might advantageously be made to check on the former students who do not re-register in the fall. Most of these non-registrants are too old to be reached by truancy laws but the interest evidenced by an autumn follow-up might be a force strong enough to draw them back into school membership. On the other hand, there is a possibility that such losses were not drop-outs, but were instead transfers, and the drop-out rate of the local school would thus be considerably lowered. In connection with this suggestion, it might be helpful in the over-all solution of the whole problem if transcripts were required for high school admission as they are for college entrance. This would constitute a check which might show a much higher percentage of holding power throughout the country than is now apparent. Such a requirement would also help in keeping in touch with all students, leavers or potential graduates, and each contact point makes for stronger holding power.

One local study can have little bearing on the whole problem unless it indicates a trend of divergence from general assumptions. This was the case in two of the factors

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studied and seemed to be indicated in a third. The results of the local survey supported Dillon's study and tended to make questionable the assumption of some surveys that a low I.Q. and consequent school maladjustment is a general cause for failure to complete the high school course. It appears to be a definite cause in a per cent of the cases and a part of the complex causal pattern of others and should therefore not be overlooked or underestimated. However, the percentage of low I.Q.'s among the early leavers may be much smaller than was believed by many of the earlier investigators.

The other point of definite divergence from the results of earlier studies appears to show an actual change in conditions. The first research in holding power indicated the largest drop-out loss to be in the ninth and tenth grades. This was not true in this local survey, nor has it been true in other local surveys of like nature. The present trend seems to be for the larger group of leavers to be found in the junior and senior years. There may be many reasons for this. Social promotions may result in the slow student completing the years of compulsory school attendance in his junior year rather than as a freshman or sophomore. The present draft law may affect the boys in this age group either by calling the failing students of draft age for armed service, or by inducing voluntary enlistments in those years. On the other hand, the increasing number of high school marriages cannot help but increase the

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number of drop-outs among the girls at that level. Whatever the reasons, there is a change in the years of incidence which, if it continues to be borne out in local surveys, will result in a change of emphasis in some phases of the national problem.

The third difference occurred in the results found in the survey of hidden costs. The local solution of this question would seem to infer that this is a problem of school administration and can be eliminated as a cause for school-leaving if the individual school system is willing to assume the responsibility for so doing. However, the local survey was made in a period of prosperity. A change in the economic status of the community would have a serious adverse effect on such a situation.

Several problem areas appeared to be of particular importance in the study of the specific factor of marriage. Such problems were controversial in nature and may best be stated as questions:

1. Has a school the right to deny admittance to any child within legal school age?

2. If the school has such a right, shall the qualifications be determined by state law or set up for each individual by a local board or by an administrator?

3. Should a married student be assisted by a flexible schedule to complete his high school course or is such assistance a special privilege which tends to condone

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early marriages?

4. Is the attendance of a married student, particularly one who is pregnant, a bad influence on the other pupils?

The answer to these problems will necessitate further investigation and a wide scale pooling of judgments but the initial survey makes apparent that sincerity on the part of the American school, which claims to serve all the youth, necessitates that high school education be made available to the married student as well as the unmarried. Practical changes in the school curriculum which will aid the married student may not be too much to expect when the increasing percentage of the marriage-drop is brought to the attention of the national school community.

The problem of the early school-leaver, the student who fails to complete his high school course, is not one of national crisis. It is the problem of an individual child whose needs are not being met by an individual school. It will be solved by the understanding and patience of the individual school teacher and guidance counselor. Surveys and investigations can only bring added insight to the worker on the local level. There is no substitute for the responsibility of the inter-personal relationship.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

CASE HISTORIES TAKEN FROM ACTUAL INTERVIEWS WITH DROP-OUTS

Case Study No. 1.

Jane was one of the married students, the wife of a private in the Air Force. She had transferred to the local high school in her senior year. Jane was eighteen, older than most of the girls in her class. Her transferred grades were better than average; but she had one failing grade, in English Literature, at the end of the first six weeks in the local high school. Jane came to school only in the mornings; from noon until seven o'clock at night and all day Saturday she worked as a nurse's aid in one of the hospitals. After seven she went home and did the housework: washing, ironing, cleaning and the day's accumulation of dishes. Now, at the beginning of the second six weeks she was in the office of the Dean of Women, determined to drop school.

"I'm failing in English Literature," she explained, "I'm just too tired to study at night after the housework is done and I have to take my Literature home. There isn't time to get it at school."

The dean suggested she drop the literature course, but that meant she would be short one credit for graduation at the end of the first semester. It was too late in the year to change courses.

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"I just can't see going on like this and then ending up minus one credit."

"Going on like this" meant being pushed every day, never a moment to relax, to enjoy herself as young people need to do. Jane's manner was poised, but her voice was taut with strain from too much to do and keeping a stiff upper lip. The counselor felt sure that here was a girl who wanted to finish school, but she seemed to resent any help in the solution of her problem. As the counselor hesitated, searching for the right suggestion, Jane's reserve suddenly broke. In the tears that followed, the counselor's sympathy found its mark. Quietly she agreed that maybe Jane should withdraw, but at the same time she gave the girl before her to understand that she would be welcomed back into her classes at any time, should she change her mind about leaving.

Within a week Jane was back in school. She dropped the Literature course and agreed to take one course the following semester graduating in June with her class. Her return was a tribute to a wise counselor, who knew when not to push.

Case Study No. 2.

Terry was just under eighteen, and in the first semester of his senior year, when he dropped school. He was a tall, gangling youth whose thinking was slow and had

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always to be actively motivated. His I.Q. was 109. He owned his own hot rod so he could see a practical use for the course in Auto Mechanics; he made B's in that; otherwise his grade average was about a D or less.

Terry's mother was a widow who had recently remarried, and Terry didn't care for his stepfather. He didn't stay home much any more, and he didn't go to school regularly either. He wanted to enlist but he was having a hard time getting his mother to sign the papers. He was thinking about that, he later told the counselor, when he was picked up by the highway police for speeding, and passing a car on a hill. He was taken before the court in the little town where he was arrested, fined and forbidden to drive his car for six months. Then a young police sergeant took pity on him and offered to drive him back to Rapid City.

The sergeant was a Korean veteran and didn't think much of military service. He and Terry talked things over. The veteran was "forever kicking himself" that he hadn't finished high school. He'd had an awful time even getting a job on the police force, every place he went looking for work they'd ask him about his high school record. "You sure need your high school diploma in the business world these days."

Terry listened. Next day he was back in school. An understanding counselor saw that he had extra help in making up his work and that his newly aroused interest was used as

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a motivating force. The term report he handed in for make-up in Sociology was on Hot Rods and the Teen-Ager and rated a B grade.

"The kids that have read it," he explained to the teacher as he gave it to her, "think I've made it simple enough so you can understand it."

No one in the graduating class was quite so proud as Terry was when he walked across the platform to receive his diploma.

Case Study No. 3.

David, a ninth grader, was a Mexican lad, seventeen years old, though he appeared much younger with his unkempt hair and engaging smile; a smile which revealed cigarette-stained, decaying teeth. It was not the first time David had quit school and the counselor began the routine questions patiently.

"Why do you want to quit school, David?"

"It takes too long, and then I have no money. Sure I make good wages, but half I give to my mother. The other half is not enough for fun. I went to Nebraska for Labor Day. It was fun, but my car broke down. I bought a new shirt but now that shirt is dirty and I have no shirt to wear to school."

The counselor suggested that if David could not wash his own shirt perhaps his Mother would do it for him. Then he would have a shirt to wear to school.

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"Mom, she is too busy," David shook his head sadly. "Too many kids to take care of. Ten kids! Not really ten, my brother and I take care of ourselves, and my two sisters are married -- that's how I got this shirt I have on, off my brother-in-law. But I gotta get me another job, this one's good pay, but it's too hot (roofing at the Air Base). I want a job with a construction company, then I can buy me a car. The one I got don't run no more."

David quit school again.

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APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

1421 West Blvd.
Rapid City, S. Dak.
January 5, 1953

Principal of the High School

Dear Sir:

In doing some research on marriage as a cause for early leavers, I have discovered very few statistics available and would deeply appreciate it if you would answer the following three questions:

1. What percentage of your dropouts would you estimate to be due to the marriage of the student?

2. Does your school have any regulations as to the attendance of a married student?

3. If there are such regulations, what are the reasons for them?

Perhaps I should explain that in our own system marriage is one of the more important reasons for dropouts, and we are anxious to learn if any form of regulation or change in curriculum can help solve the situation.

Any suggestions you may have either in answer to the questions above, or in other ways of approaching such a problem would be most helpful, and I shall hope to hear from you by the first part of March.

Sincerely,

s/ Ealsa L. Rowe

Ealsa L. Rowe
Instructor of Sociology

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